

HOW TO APPLY FOR AN ABSENTEE BALLOT

I can't get to the polls on election day. Can I vote?

Yes. You may vote by absentee ballot if you:

- will be absent from your city or town on election day, and/or
- have a physical disability that prevents your voting at the polling place, and/or
- cannot vote at the polls due to religious beliefs.

How can I apply for an absentee ballot?

Apply in writing to Town clerk or and include your:

- name,
- address as registered,
- ward and precinct (if you know them),
- address where you wish the absentee ballot sent,
- in a primary, the party ballot you want, and
- your signature.

There is an application form available at your local election office or by downloading the application on this webpage. You may also make application by letter or note. Whichever method you choose, the application must be made in writing and signed.

Voting on Your Absentee Ballot. . .

You can either have an absentee ballot mailed to you or you can arrange to vote in the Town Hall.

The ballot will come with instructions and a set of return envelopes. After making your choices on the ballot, you must enclose it in the inner (smaller) brown envelope and read and complete the information on the front of that envelope and sign it. Then you put the smaller envelope in the bigger envelope, place proper postage on it and mail it back to Town Hall.

Returning your absentee ballot. . .

You may return your completed absentee ballot by mail or you or a family member may hand-deliver it to the local election official. Your completed ballot **cannot** be delivered directly to your polling place on Election Day.

If mailing your ballot, please make sure to include the proper postage.

To be counted, a completed ballot must be received by the time the polls close on Election Day to be counted.

If you are voting from outside the United States, your completed absentee ballot for a final state or city election can be received up until 10 days after the election, but must be postmarked on or before Election Day.

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Absentee Balloting

Can anyone else apply for an absentee ballot for me?

Yes. A family member may apply for you.

When should I submit my application for an absentee ballot?

If you wish to vote by absentee ballot for more than one election in a year you may make one application and request that ballots for all elections during that calendar year be sent to you.

If you vote by mail, make certain the application arrives at your local election office early. Remember, the ballot will be mailed to you. You may mail or hand-deliver it back to the election office but must arrive before the close of the polls on election day (8:00 p.m. for state elections).

If you cast your ballot at the Clerk's office before election day, plan to visit the office two or three weeks before the election. You can make your application and cast your vote in one visit.

Call the Clerk's office to make certain that the absentee ballots are available. Absentee ballots should be available three weeks before an election.

How do I vote by absentee ballot?

You may vote at the Clerk's office or request that the ballot be mailed to you. The deadline for applying for an absentee ballot is noon of the day before the election. If the day before an election is a Sunday or a holiday, the deadline to apply for an absentee ballot will be 5 pm on the preceding business day.

Can a family member apply for my absentee ballot?

Yes.

Must I be a registered voter in order to vote by absentee ballot?

Yes, unless you are a "specially qualified voter". A specially qualified voter is a person:

- who is otherwise eligible to register as a voter and
- whose present domicile is outside the United States and whose last domicile in the United States was Massachusetts or whose present domicile is Massachusetts and who is:

(a) absent from the city or town or residence and in the active service of the armed forces or in the merchant marine of the United States or a spouse or dependent of such person;

(b) absent from the commonwealth; or

(c) confined in a correctional facility or a jail, **except if by reason of felony conviction.**

Must my ballot be witnessed?

No.

What if I'm not able to mark my absentee ballot?

You may ask any person to help you. The helper must print his or her name and your name on the brown envelope, write the reason you needed help and then sign his or her name as the assisting person.

Are polling places accessible to elderly and disabled voters?

Yes. Federal law required polling places be accessible by 1986.

I'm permanently disabled. May I vote at home?

Yes. You must apply to your local election office to do so. File a letter from your doctor with the Town Clerk. The doctor must state that you are permanently unable to cast your ballot at the polling place due to a physical disability.

The local election official will automatically mail you an application for an absentee ballot for all elections in a calendar year. You must sign the application and send it back to your local election official.

Call the Town Clerk's Office for information about how to register to vote at home or to request that a mail-in registration form be sent to you.

My parent is in a nursing home. Is she/he able to vote by absentee ballot?

Yes, as long as that individual is not under a court ordered guardianship which specifically prohibits voting.

Any patient in a nursing home must be a registered voter in order to vote by absentee ballot and must fill out an absentee ballot application.

If the clerk designates a health care facility in writing 28 days before the election, the ballot must be hand-delivered to such facility by a Registrar. If the patient states that he/she has entered a hospital after noon of the fifth day before the election, the ballot may be hand-delivered to the voter; otherwise, the ballot should be mailed to the voter at the facility.

Consult the administration of the nursing home for further instructions.

How do I return my absentee ballot to my local election official?

After marking your ballot, insert it into the inner envelope provided and seal that inner envelope. Read and sign the affirmation on the inner envelope. Place the signed and sealed inner envelope in the mailing envelope provided with your ballot. The ballot can either be mailed back to your local election official or your or a family member may deliver it by hand to the local election official. You cannot deliver an absentee ballot directly to the polling place on Election Day.